Mature Content
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DIRTY PICTURES

The Naughty Art of the '30s Pulps

A • AIRCEL COMICS • #3 • $2.50/$3.00 in Canada

Introduction by John Wooley

Last issue, we devoted some space to Majestic Studios, the art shop begun by Adolphe Barreaux in the late 1920s, and how Barreaux and the studio hooked up with *Spicy* pulp publisher Frank Armer and began knocking out interior illustrations to match the *Spicy* prose stories—the same kids of illustrations collected here in *Dirty Pictures*. And, as was mentioned in issue #2, it can be tough to try and figure out which artist did what piece of art. Of course, since much—if not all—of it was coming from an art shop, a lot of the drawings could have been collaborations of one sort or other.

Still, if we take the work in this issue—lovingly culled from a representative sampling of the *Spicy* titles of the '30s—we can at least match a few artists with illustrations. For instance:

—The drawings from "The Curse Of The Cawnpore," "The Walking Dead," and "The Cat That Killed" are by Joseph Sokoli, who found steady employment with Barreaux from somewhere around 15 years, getting with the *Spicy* pulps at their beginnings and staying when they toned down and became the *Speed* pulps, painting some covers for the group in the mid-to late '40s.

—Besides Sokoli, the only other *Spicy* interior artist to sign his work with any regularity was H.L.V. Parkhurst. He's represented in this issue by an illo from "24 Hours To Go." Although the art is from *Spicy Detective*, Parkhurst seemed more at home illustrating costumed adventure with a little grander sweep, the kinds of stories more likely to be found in *Spicy Adventure Stories*.

—Max Plaisted, the man whose work—for my money, anyway—defined the *je ne sais quoi* of the *Spicy* pulps better than anyone, is amply represented in these pages. Compare the illustrations for "Murder Mesa," "Fall of a Fiend," "Phantom of Fairmont," and "The Brute and the Beauty," and you'll get a good idea of the characteristics of Plaisted's work—including a clean, sharp line, big eyes, and small-mouthed, sharp-chinned women who, if you'll excuse the sexist remark, look as though they could trip you and beat you to the floor. I also suspect that Plaisted had something to do with the two drawings from "Ghost Gift." Possibly, he pencilled them and Barreaux inked them; the inking style, with dominant solid blacks, recalls Barreaux's early versions of the "Sally the Sleuth" comic strip in *Spicy Detective*.

—Barreaux himself is a little harder to pin down, stylewise. Based on the run of the above-mentioned "Sally" strip, which Barreaux signed, it would seem that his art evolved from the sharp, dark, one-dimensional look of the early two-pagers to a more rounded, conventional comic-book style later on. A reasonably educated guess would put "Pinch-Penny, Bulldogger" and "Jewels of Wanoo" into the Barreaux canon.

—Another guess makes the art for "Hearts of the Half-Dead" and "Blackmail Hotel" the work of H.W. Kiemle, whose fuzzily effective linework graced many a *Speed* pulp, and "Accusing Corpse" may have

(Continued on inside back cover.)

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Dirty Pictures #3 • June 1991

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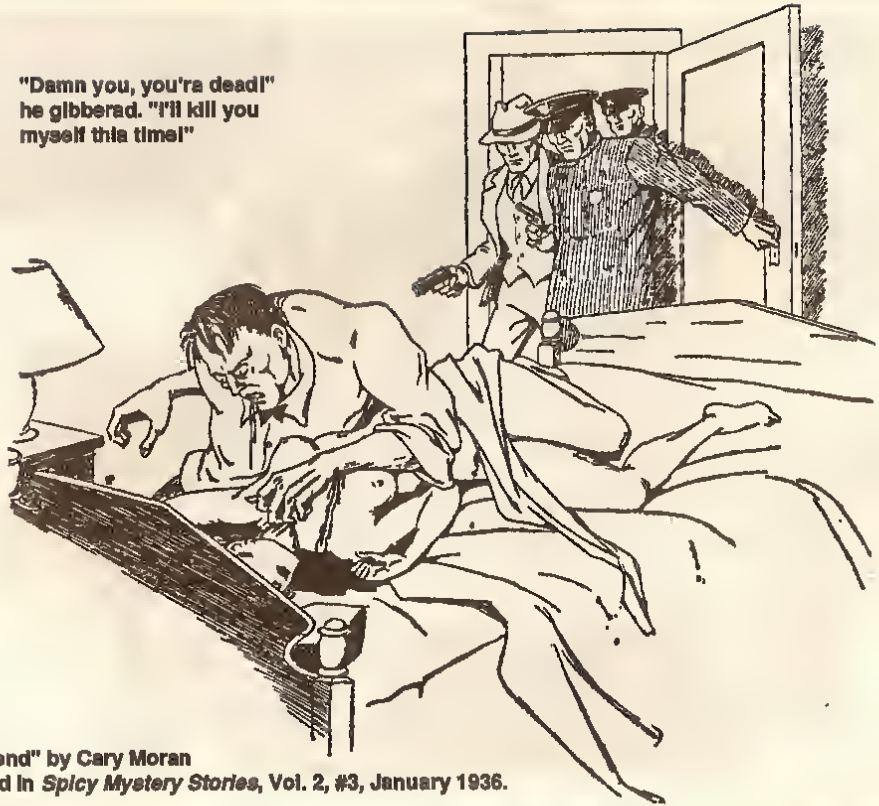
"Watch, quarida, and see what happens to those who cross El Diablo Rojo!"

From "Murder Mesa" by James L. Gordon
Originally appeared in *Spicy Western Stories*, Vol. 9, #2, March 1942.

Both illustrations from "Pinch-Penny, Bulldogger" by Laurence Donovan Originally appeared in *Spicy Western Stories*, Vol. 10, #2, November 1942.

"Kind o'snoopin, ain't yuh, Tiny?" Pincher demanded.



From "Fall Of A Fiend" by Cary Moran
Originally appeared in *Spicy Mystery Stories*, Vol. 2, #3, January 1936.

From "Fall Of A Fiend" by Cary Moran
Originally appeared in *Spicy Mystery Stories*, Vol. 2, #3, January 1936.

The moment the house dick appeared, I shoved her at him.

From "24 Hours To Go" by Mort Lansing
Originally appeared in *Spicy Detective Stories*, Vol. 6, #4, February 1937.

Over her fallen body he flashed the acimitar at her throat.

From "The Curse Of The Cawnpore" by MagnuaBredenbeck
Originally appeared in *Spicy Mystery Stories*, Vol. 2, #2, December 1935.

"You beast!" she whispered. I wasn't afraid of that shiv--but I knew she'd use it!

Glory lunged forward with the knife. "You're behind this! I know you are!"

Both from "Blackmail Hotel" by N. Wooten Page
Originally appeared in *Spicy Detective Stories*, Vol. 6, #4, February 1937.

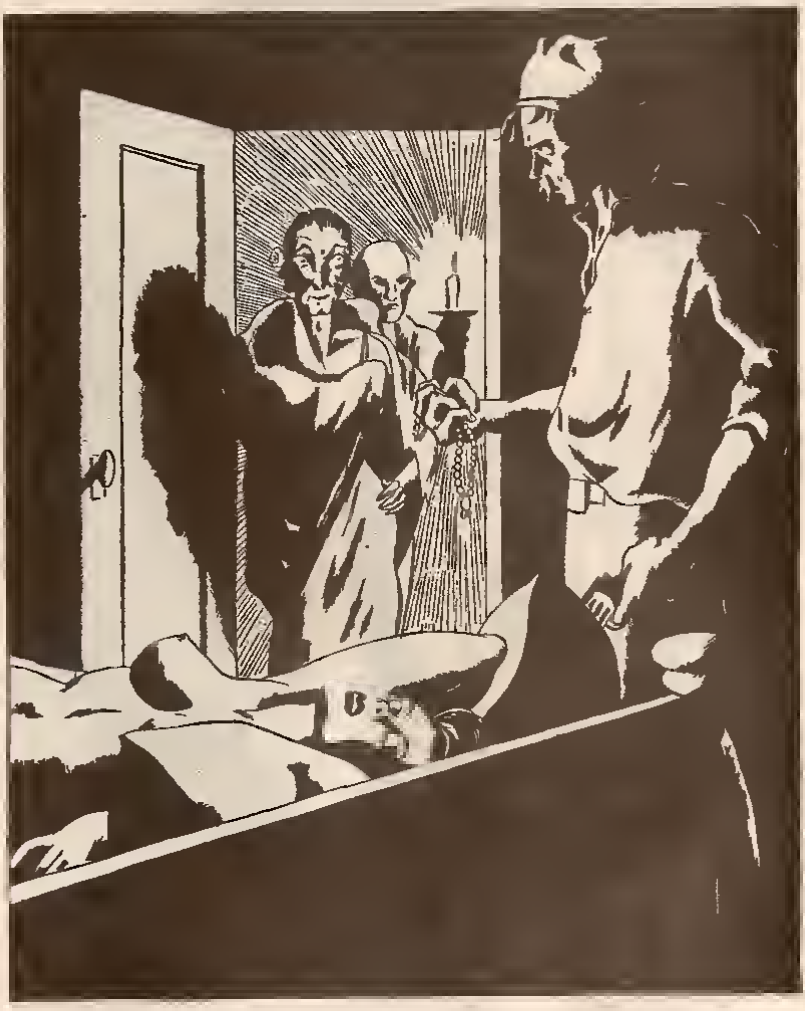
In an instant she had whisked the knife from her stocking.
The muggs were trying to get out of the cab now...

From "Blackmail Hotel" by N. Wooten Page
Originally appeared in *Spicy Detective Stories*, Vol. 6, #4, February 1937.

From "Zannini's Puppets" by Justin Case
Originally appeared in *Spicy Western Stories*, Vol. 7, #3, August 1938.

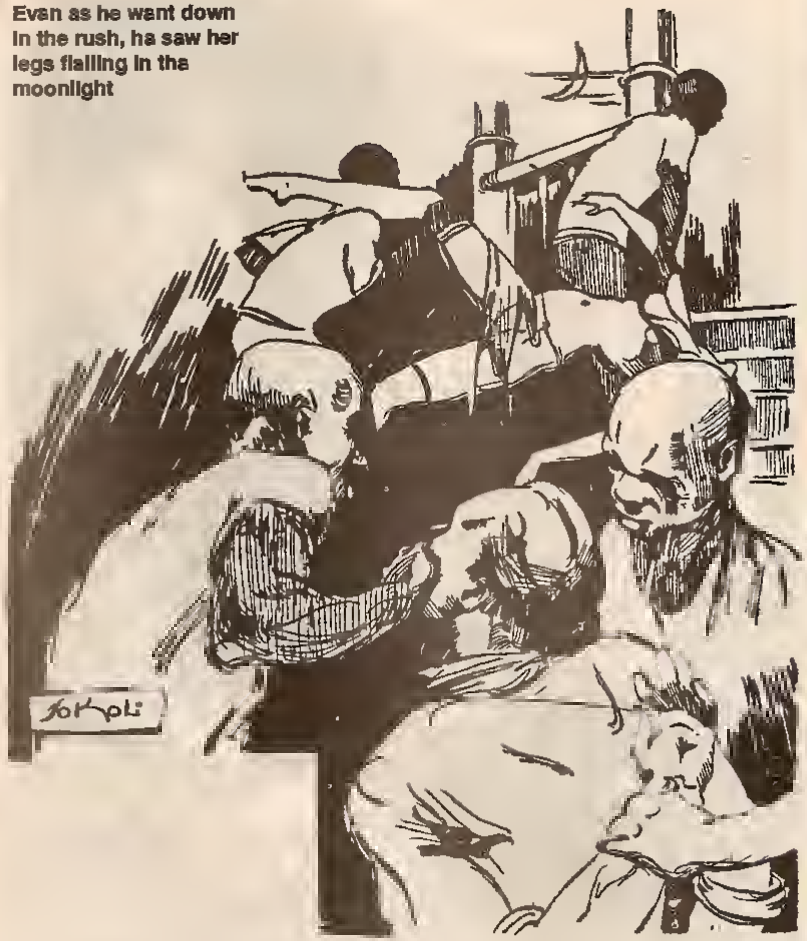
From "Ghost Gift" by Clint Morgan
Originally appeared in *Spicy Mystery Stories*, Vol. 1, #3, July 1935.

It was the glittering necklace that he held up to them in the candlelight.



From "Ghost Gift" by Clint Morgan
Originally appeared in *Spicy Mystery Stories*, Vol. 1, #3, July 1935.

From "Phantom Of Fairmont" by Ken Cooper
Originally appeared in *Spicy Mystery Stories*, Vol. 2, #1, November 1935.



Even as he went down in the rush, he saw her legs flailing in the moonlight

From "The Walking Dead" by E. Hofman Price
Originally appeared in *Spicy Mystery Stories*, Vol. 2, #1, November 1935.

Her chant rose to a singing shriek as Cathar approached.

From "Accusing Corpse" by Carl Moore
Originally appeared in *Spicy Mystery Stories*, Vol. 2, #61 November 1935.

"Not love! Not love!" he shouted. "It's my repulsiveness you think of!"

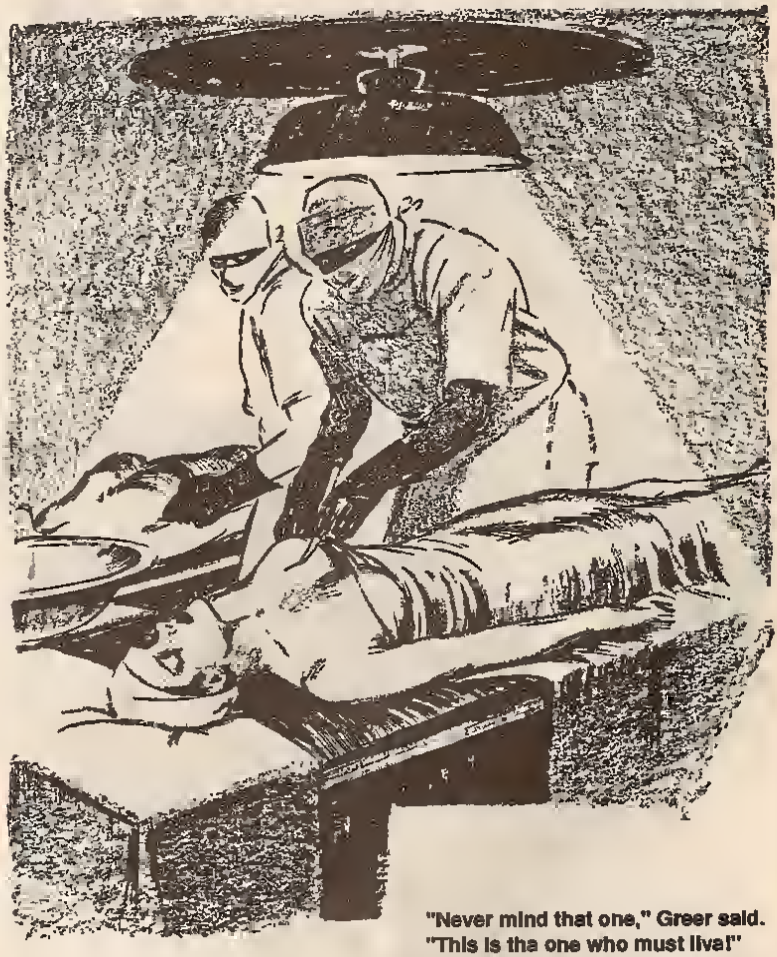
With all his might he attacked the monster towering over the girl.

Both from "The Brute And The Beauty" by Clint Morgen
Originally appeared in *Spicy Mystery Stories*, Vol. 2, #2, December 1935.

From "The Brute And The Beauty" by Clint Morgan
Originally appeared in *Spicy Mystery Stories*, Vol. 2, #2, December 1935.

They found her with the knife in one hand, the gun beside her.

From "Hearts from the Half-Dead" by Colby Quinn
Originally appeared in *Spicy Mystery Stories*, Vol. 4, #3, July 1937.



"Never mind that one," Greer said. "This is the one who must live!"

From "Hearts from the Half-Dead" by Colby Quinn
Originally appeared in *Spicy Mystery Stories*, Vol. 4, #3, July 1937.

From "Cat That Killed" by Mort Lansing.
Originally appeared in *Spicy Mystery Stories*, Vol. 2, #3, January 1936.

They pushed in staring at the woman lying glassy-eyed and bloody on the bed.

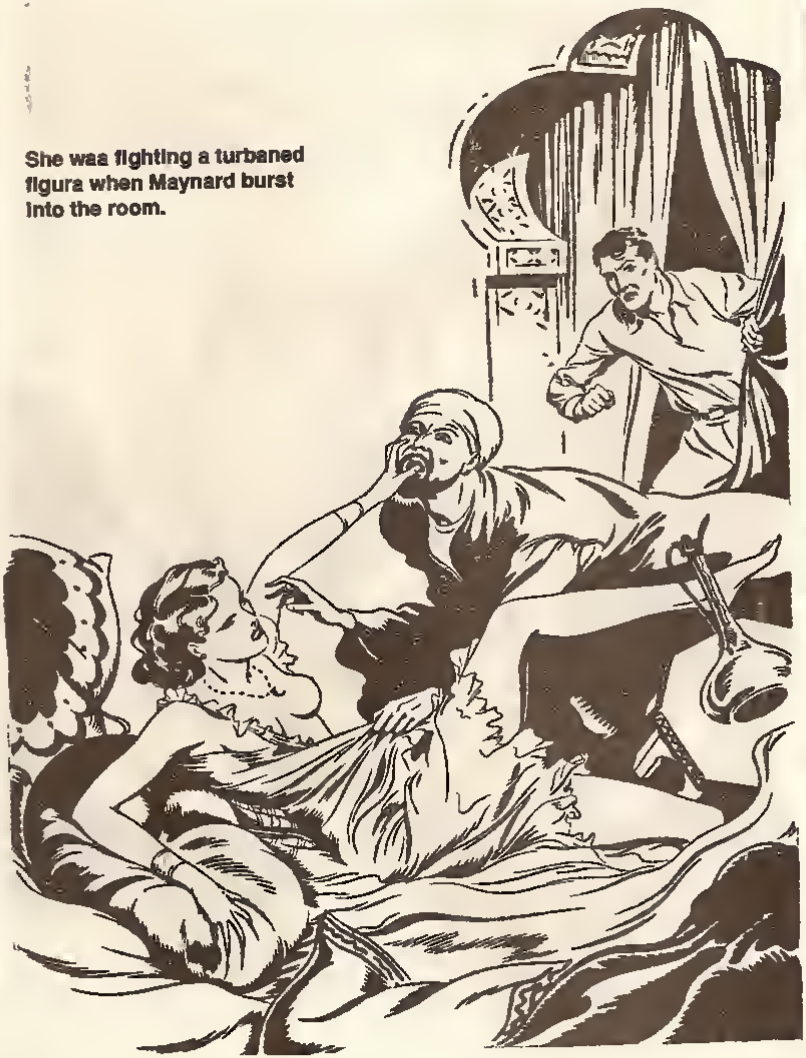
There was something feline, cat-like, about her that fascinated me against my will.

From "Cat That Killed" by Mort Lansing
Originally appeared in *Spicy Mystery Stories*, Vol. 2, #3, January 1936.

Carrying Rapinee'a assistant, Johnny followed Rita.

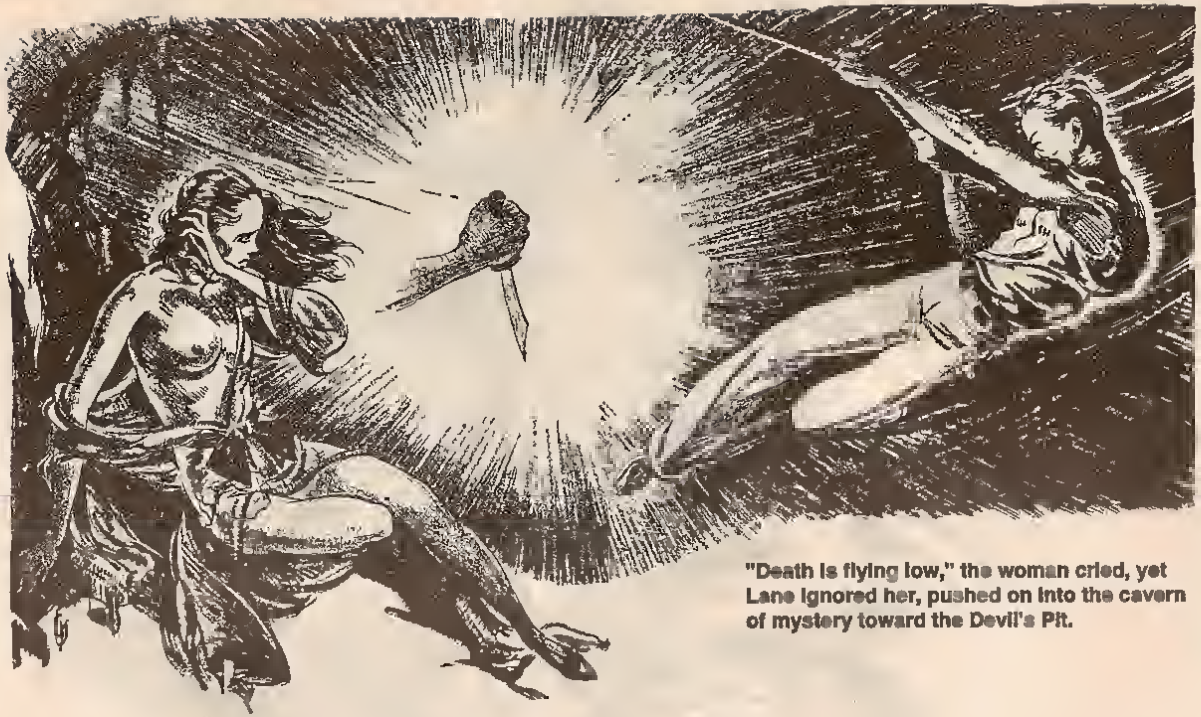
From "Murder Magic" by Cary Moran
Originally appeared in *Spicy Detective Stories*, Vol. 5, #6,October 1936.

From "Tomb Dweller" by E. Hoffman Price
Originally appeared in *Spicy Mystery Stories*, Vol. 2, #2, December 1935.



She was fighting a turbaned figure when Maynard burst into the room.

From "Tomb Dweller" by E. Hoffman Price
Originally appeared in *Spicy Mystery Stories*, Vol. 2, #2, December 1935.

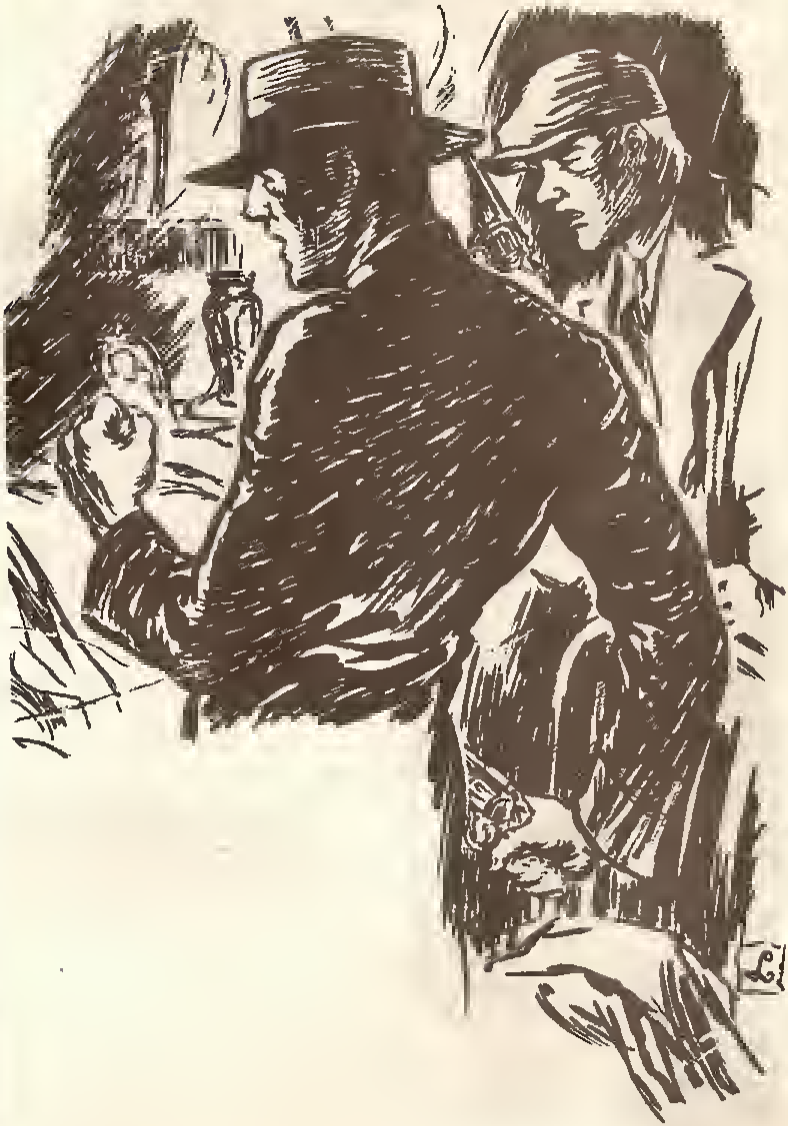


"Death is flying low," the woman cried, yet Lane ignored her, pushed on into the cavern of mystery toward the Devil's Pit.

From "Bowels Of Darkness" by Philipe di Mario
Originally appeared in *Spicy Mystery Stories*, Vol. 2, #2, December 1935.

"Tha American soldier knowa no fear. He will fight on this front until the last man drops."

Both from "Yellow Belly" by Phillipe di Mario
Originally appeared in *Spicy Detective Stories*, Vol. 3, #1, May 1935.



"I'm making a tour of the night courts," he said grimly. "Don't wait for me."

From "Yellow Belly" by Phillipe di Mario
Originally appeared in *Spicy Detective Stories*, Vol. 3, #1, May 1935.

"Come on," he growled, "what split do you get from Zepol?"

From "Yellow Belly" by Philipe di Mario
Originally appeared in *Spicy Detective Stories*, Vol. 3, #1, May 1935.

From "Pay Off, Or Else!" by W.W. McKanna
Originally appeared in *Spicy Detective Stories*, Vol. 5, #6, October 1936.

She crumpled slowly as he leaped forward.

From "Killer's Snatch" by Thomas H. Byrnes
Originally appeared in *Spicy Detective Stories*, Vol. 3, #1, May 1935.

The girl shuddered as he came nearer, mouthing curses.

From "Jawels of Wenoo" by Grant S. Sassaman
Originally appeared in *Spicy Mystery Stories*, Vol. 2, #1, November 1935.

(Continued from inside front cover.)

come from one Jay McArdle, another *Speed* artist. Both McArdle and Kiemle were part of a large group of artists who began getting credit in the pages of the *Speed* titles in late 1946. Others included the wonderfully named Newt Alfred, William Meilink, Al Savitt, Robert McCarthy, Kingsland Ward (who may have been the great *Spicy* cover artist H.J. Ward), Frank Volp, Malcolm Kildale, William Finley and George Van Werveke.

Interestingly enough, one "R. Manning" also appeared in *Private Detective* in the late '40s. Although the art isn't particularly distinguished, and done in what may have been a house style, it's possibly some of the great Russ Manning's earliest work. He began his comic book career in the early '50s, after a stint in the Army, and it's quite possible that he could've knocked out a few drawings for Barreaux before his military service. If that's true, it makes the *Spicy/Speed* pulps the only pulp line to have two Tarzan artists on its roster—Rex Maxon, who drew the *Tarzan* newspaper strip in the '40s, also toiled for Barreaux at various times.

There are still lots of mysteries about the originators of this frequently great art, though. Who, for instance, was the person responsible for "Bowels of Darkness"? He, or she, shows up a lot in the *Spicy* pulps, leaving behind the same stylized, tantalizing cryptic initials (LM? LMC? CLM?). And who was the artist who signed the cursive "L" to his art, including the drawings from "Yellow Belly" seen here? He, too, was a frequent contributor to the *Spicy* books, as was the artist on "Zannini's Puppets," whose etching-style work was all over the titles in the mid '30s.

In all likelihood, there's someone out there who knows the answers. Indeed, some of the old *Spicy/Speed* artists are undoubtedly still working. We at Malibu Graphics would welcome any light they could shed on their mostly unknown and unheralded brethren, and we would also welcome correspondence from pulp fans who know, or think they know, a little more about who did what.

Any takers?

—John Wooley

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